

DE News

November 2, 2001 -- Department of Education

Special Session set for November 8

Legislators will be meeting in Des Moines November 8 to decide key budget issues. Specifically, they will determine if they will restore any funding that was cut as part of the 4.3% across-the-board cut that went into effect yesterday. Legislative leaders have said they plan to restore \$3 million to public safety and defense, but don't know how much of the education funding may be restored.

4.3% reduction details on the Web

On November 1, the Governor issued an Executive Order reducing all state appropriations by 4.3%. Details about the state aid reductions for community colleges and in school district foundation aid, AEA special education support services foundation aid, instructional support, technology and school improvement/class size reduction block grants are available on our Web site. Please note these are subject to change following the Special Session on November 8. Additional information will be provided with the November state aid payments.

Teacher Quality participation is high

The high number of districts who have applied for both the mentoring/induction programs and career paths/salaries indicate a strong commitment statewide for investing in instruction. Ninety-eight percent of districts now are signed up for mentoring/induction (Option 1), and that includes 17 districts that don't have new teachers. About 75% have applied for the career paths/salaries (Option 2).

Participants for the Team-based Variable Pay pilots (Option 3) also have been selected. They are Davis Elementary and Middle School; Oak Park in Des Moines; Elliott Elementary in Griswold; Lawson Elementary, Johnston Middle and Johnston High in Johnston; Indian Creek Elementary in Linn Mar; Wings Park Elementary, Harlan Elementary, Parkside Elementary, Oelwein Middle and High School in Oelwein; Stratford Elementary; Missouri Valley Middle School; Northeast Hamilton; and Stockport Elementary and Douds Elementary in Van Buren.

What will the future bring for the Teacher Quality program?

With high participation rates in the first year and very questionable future state revenues, it is logical to ask what will be Iowa's commitment to the future of this policy? Of course much depends on what is still to emerge in terms of future state revenue projections and other competing needs, but some aspects of this policy enjoy strong legislative support and will likely continue barring much worse economic news. For example, I think that it is reasonable to assume that the broad support and quick start-up of the mentoring and induction program will argue for its continuance. The evaluation component that is being developed and is linked to that induction and mentoring is likely to continue. On the other hand, the development of career levels for experienced teachers may not move forward as quickly in this financial environment.

It would appear to me that the part of this year's teacher quality policy that is most likely to be affected by declining revenues might be the component of the program that could this year deliver \$31.2 million dollars to Iowa's teachers. While I am a strong advocate for supporting every beginning teacher with a quality induction and mentoring program and providing fair evaluations as well, I believe just as strongly that Iowa should not merely maintain the current commitment to improving compensation. Iowa should, in fact, continue to make advancements beyond the growth that districts have been able to achieve on their own. If we fail to do so, we will only fall farther behind and be less competitive than other states. Prior to our implementation of the new teacher quality and compensation policies, our average teacher salaries are \$6,419 below the national average; in our smallest school districts, where the average salary is nearly \$15,000 below the national average, the disparity is felt even more. These inequities are a good indicator of why we need to maintain and expand our current policy commitment.

DE News provides timely information about legislative and policy issues, grants and funding, trends in education, and other items of immediate interest to Iowa educators and policymakers. Contact Kathi Slaughter, 515/281-5651; fax 515/281-4122; email kathi.slaughter@ed.state.ia.us.